

Amendments to the Specification are as follows:

Before the first sentence on page 1 please insert the following paragraph.

This application claims the benefit of priority to Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-114189 and 2004-047758, herein incorporated by reference.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 23 and ending on page 6, line 3 as follows:

A nonmagnetic metallic material used for forming the large-area nonmagnetic metal films preferably has lower resistivity than that of a shield material. For example, the nonmagnetic metallic material preferably contains at least one element of Au, Ag, Cu, Ru, Rh, Ir, Pd, Ni-Cr, (Ni-Fe)-Cr, and Cr. Particularly, when the nonmagnetic metallic material contains Cr, the Cr content preferably exceeds 20 atomic percent. Each of the large-area nonmagnetic metal films may be a single layer film or a laminated film.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 3 and ending on page 7, line 15 as follows:

In a third form, the pinned magnetic layer preferably extends in the track width direction beyond the free magnetic layer and the nonmagnetic layer, and the antiferromagnetic layers are preferably provided on both sides of the pinned magnetic layer in the track width direction, for pinning the magnetization direction of the pinned magnetic layer. In this case, when the pinned magnetic layer has a laminated ferrimagnetic structure comprising a first pinned magnetic layer, a nonmagnetic intermediate layer and a second pinned magnetic layer, only the first pinned magnetic layer extends in the track width direction so that the antiferromagnetic layers are provided on both sides of the ~~first~~^{first} pinned magnetic layer in the track width direction.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 17, line 11 and ending on page 18, line 6 as follows:

The nonmagnetic layer 32 preferably comprises a conductive material with low electric resistance, and in this embodiment, the nonmagnetic layer 32 comprises, for example, Cu. The nonmagnetic layer 32 is formed to a

thickness of about 25 Å, for example. Part or entirety of the free magnetic layer 31 comprises Fe-Co-Cu (wherein Fe > 10 atomic percent, Co > 30 atomic percent, and Cu > 5 atomic percent), Fe-Co-Cu-X (wherein X is at least one element of Pt, Pd, Mn, Si, Au, and Ag), or Co₂MnY (wherein Y is at least one element of Ge, Si, Sn, and Al). The thickness of the free magnetic layer 31 is, for example, about 100 Å. Although the free magnetic layer 31 has a single-layer structure comprising a magnetic film, a laminated structure or laminated ferrimagnetic structure comprising magnetic films may be used. Furthermore, hard bias layers 63 are in contact with both sides of the free magnetic layer 31 and the nonmagnetic layer 32, the hard bias layers 63 being magnetized in the track width direction. Also, a first or second insulating layer 61 or 64 with a thickness of several Å to several tens Å may be interposed between the GMR element 30 and each hard bias layer 63. The magnetization of the free magnetic layer 31 is aligned in the track width direction (the X direction) by a longitudinal bias magnetic field of each of the hard bias layers 63.